3.5 Liberal Thinkers: John Stuart Mill and John Rawls: Test Pack

Total Marks

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 15 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answers may use bullet points. For levels-marked questions write a well-structured, developed response using accurate knowledge of Mill and Rawls and precise terminology. The final 30-mark essay must be answered in full sentences.

1 This question tests basic recall of John Stuart Mill's harm principle from On Liberty. Define the harm principle.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 This question checks recall of John Rawls's thought experiment in A Theory of Justice. State what is meant by the 'original position' and the 'veil of ignorance'.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 This question tests knowledge of Mill's concept of developmental individualism as a reason for liberty. Explain what is meant by developmental individualism.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 This question asks for application: explain two ways Rawls's difference principle permits limits on individual economic freedom in favour of redistribution, as set out in A Theory of Justice.

(Total for Question 4 is 5 marks)

5 This question tests comparative factual recall about the thinkers: state one difference between Mill and Rawls on the justification for limits to liberty, naming both thinkers and their works.

(Total for Question 5 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.5 Liberal Thinkers: John Stuart Mill and John Rawls: Test Pack

Question 1

a concise definition of the harm principle, that individual liberty may only be limited to prevent harm to others **B1**

Answer: The harm principle states that the only justification for exerting power over an individual against their will is to prevent harm to others.

Question 2

identifies the original position as a hypothetical contract situation for choosing principles of justice **B1**

identifies the veil of ignorance as the device that prevents knowledge of personal characteristics so choice is impartial **B1**

Answer: The original position is a hypothetical situation where rational agents choose principles of justice behind a veil of ignorance that prevents them knowing their social status, talents or aims, ensuring impartial and fair principles.

Question 3

identifies that developmental individualism values liberty because it allows individuals to pursue personal growth and moral development **B1**

explains that Mill believed individuality leads to higher quality of human flourishing and social progress **B1**

Answer: Mill's developmental individualism holds that liberty permits individuals to develop their unique capacities and character, which leads to higher human flourishing and benefits society through diversity and innovation.

Question 4

identifies one way, e.g. progressive taxation to benefit the least advantaged **B1**

develops that progressive taxation reduces some individual economic freedoms to achieve improved prospects for the worst off **B1**

identifies a second way, e.g. regulation of markets or wages to ensure fair equality of opportunity and benefit for the least advantaged **B1**

develops that such regulation constrains pure economic freedom but aims to produce outcomes that justify the limits on liberty **B1**

links both ways to the original position reasoning that behind the veil of ignorance rational agents would accept these limits **B1**

Answer: The difference principle allows limits on individual economic freedom through measures such as progressive taxation, which reduces some disposable income of the better off to improve the share available to the least advantaged, and market regulation or minimum wages that constrain unfettered contract freedom to secure fair equality of opportunity. Both are justified because, from the original position behind the veil of ignorance, rational agents would accept rules that improve the position of the worst off.

Question 5

states Mill and his work, On Liberty (1859) **B1**

states Rawls and his work, A Theory of Justice (1971) **B1**

identifies that Mill grounds limits in the harm principle and development of individuality **B1**

identifies that Rawls grounds limits in a contractualist original position and the difference principle **B1**

explains that Mill focuses on preventing harm and promoting individuality, while Rawls focuses on impartial fairness chosen behind the veil of ignorance **B1**

offers brief evaluation e.g. this leads Mill to prioritise individual liberty unless others are harmed, while Rawls can justify more systematic redistribution for fairness **B1**

Answer: Mill (On Liberty, 1859) justifies limits through the harm principle and the value of individuality, arguing interference is only justified to prevent harm to others and to preserve conditions for personal development. Rawls (A Theory of Justice, 1971) justifies limits through a hypothetical contract chosen in the original position behind a veil of ignorance, notably the difference principle, which can legitimise redistribution to benefit the least advantaged. Mill therefore prioritises noninterference except to prevent harm, while Rawls allows broader, systematic constraints for impartial fairness.

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